



# Holiday Shopping On The Internet

## Making the Most of a Short Shopping Season

By Regina Lewis

(NAPSA)—With only 26 days between Black Friday and Christmas, the official holiday shopping season is shorter than ever this year. In an effort to make the most of the compressed holiday period, many consumers are taking advantage of a fast and easy solution to mad dashes to the mall and long lines at the register. They're doing their holiday shopping online, at home, and sometimes even in their pajamas. Online shopping gives you access to hundreds of stores and thousands of products, right at your fingertips.

Just follow these simple tips to help make your online shopping adventure quick, easy, safe and enjoyable:

- **Shop early.** Why wait? Hit the e-stores early to find the best inventory, plus you'll have peace of mind knowing that gifts will arrive with plenty of time to spare.

- **Search for one-stop shopping destinations.** With thousands of sites offering online shopping, save time and find the best selection by looking for sites that offer direct access to a wide variety of brand-name products, such as AOL SHOP, which features over 300 shopping partners.

- **Be alert for safety policies and guarantees.** Not every site on the Internet guarantees shoppers' safety and satisfaction. So before you buy, closely review the retailer's security and return policies, to ensure that it provides a comprehensive money-back-guarantee.

- **Use online "wallets" for Speedy checkouts.** Online services like AOL, Netscape and CompuServe offer online "wallet" services that safely store credit card and shipping information online, so you don't have to enter it in for each purchase.



- **Research online before you buy.** Using shopping comparison tools on the Internet to help you compare prices and product ratings before you click "buy" may save you time by cutting down on returns or exchanges after the holidays.

- **Look for sites that offer help around the clock.** Make sure that you shop at sites that make it easy if you have a question or run into a problem. Sites like AOL SHOP offer a 24-hour shopping help line that can be reached through e-mail, instant messaging, or by calling an 800 number.

- **Don't panic from procrastination.** Do you wait to do your holiday shopping at the 11th hour? Take advantage of last-minute gifts—some sites offer overnight shipping options, or buy a gift certificate that can be sent directly to the recipient's e-mail address.

- **Look for unique, hard-to-find gifts.** Adding a personal touch to gift-giving is always appreciated, and online auction sites like eBay offer a world of possibilities that you aren't likely to find at the mall.

For more information or to access the Internet's "Miracle Mile," visit America Online's shopping destination at Keyword: Shopping or on the Web at [www.aol.com/shopping](http://www.aol.com/shopping).

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